



Press Release
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**CITIZEN CORPS CELEBRATES SUCCESS AT TWO-YEAR
ANNIVERSARY**

*Survey reveals Americans interested in volunteering to support community
emergency preparedness*

Washington, DC - Launched by President George W. Bush during the 2002 State of the Union address as part of the USA Freedom Corps initiative to engage Americans in volunteer service, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge today marked the tremendous success of Citizen Corps two years later.

In only two years, nearly 1,000 communities around the country, encompassing 40 percent of the U.S. population, have established Citizen Corps Councils to help inform and train citizens in emergency preparedness and to coordinate and expand opportunities for citizen volunteers to participate in homeland security efforts and make our communities safer. Fifty-two states and territories have also formed state level Citizen Corps Councils to support local efforts.

Supporting the Citizen Corps concept, a recent opinion poll shows that Americans are interested in volunteering to help their local community emergency service providers, such as law enforcement, fire, or emergency medical services, or with organizations that focus on community safety, such as the American Red Cross or Neighborhood Watch. Forty percent of those polled say answered they would be willing to volunteer. In addition, nearly two thirds of respondents (63 percent) believe it is important for neighborhoods to have a way to work together on emergency preparedness.

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge lauded the American public's interest to help. "Through Citizen Corps, we are building a grass-roots culture of citizen preparedness. It is critical that the public be prepared personally and work with their neighborhoods and communities to do the same."

The four charter federal Citizen Corps programs, administered by FEMA, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and the Department of Justice (DOJ) have

worked in close collaboration over the past 2 years and have also seen remarkable growth:

- Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training, a FEMA program, is now available in over 900 communities in 51 states and territories - growing from approximately 100 communities in 27 states in January 2002;
- * ☐☐☐☐ DHHS has distributed over \$8 million to 167 communities in 44 states to assist in the development of Medical Reserve Corps units, which include volunteer physicians, nurses, pharmacists and others with a broad range of skills in medicine, public health and other support fields;
- * Funded by DOJ and administered by the National Sheriffs Association, the National Neighborhood Watch Program has reached its goal to double the number of Neighborhood Watch programs by registering thousands of new or revitalized programs, many of which have embraced the Homeland Security mission; and
- * ☐☐☐☐ Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) has grown from 76 registered programs to more than 740 registered programs with more than 40,000 volunteers participating in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The International Association of Chiefs of Police administers VIPS with funding from DOJ.

In addition to the four charter programs, 15 affiliate organizations have joined Citizen Corps to provide resources, training, and volunteer opportunities to communities nationwide.

"President Bush's vision of promoting citizen volunteers in homeland security is an integral part of Secretary Ridge's citizen preparedness initiative. It has enabled us to increase our efforts to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies or disasters of all types," said Michael D. Brown, Under Secretary of Homeland Security for Emergency Preparedness and Response. Brown also serves as the current chair of the National Citizen Corps Council.

While 44 percent of survey respondents say their neighborhood has a plan to help reduce crime, only 13 percent report having a neighborhood plan for disasters. Most respondents (70 percent) also say their neighborhood would be more likely to develop a neighborhood plan or group if a local government or community organization provided support. Through Citizen Corps and the Ready Campaign, the Department of Homeland Security is doing just that.

The Department's Ready Campaign is a public education initiative that provides practical advice about how to be prepared for and respond to terrorism and other emergencies. The campaign asks people to take three basic steps toward preparedness: make a kit, make a plan and be informed. Citizen Corps helps deliver that message within the community, offers training, and provides other opportunities for citizens to get involved with helping their community be safer.

While 50 percent of those surveyed reported having an emergency supply kit in their home, emergency supply kits are less common at work (41 percent) and in the car (34 percent). The survey also found that many of these kits are incomplete. Families should review their kits to be sure they contain all the recommended supplies, to include enough

food and water for 3 days, flashlight, radio, batteries, duct tape and plastic sheeting, personal items and medication, and copies of important documentation.

Citizens also view life-saving training programs as important preparedness activities, according to the survey findings. Eighty-seven percent of adults say it is important for individuals to be trained in skills such as first aid and CPR. At present, less than half of all adults (46 percent) say they feel confident in their ability to save someone in a life-threatening situation.

On November 3, 2003, Secretary Ridge announced \$35 million in fiscal year 2004 grants for Citizen Corps. Suzanne Mencer, the Director of the Office for Domestic Preparedness, which administers these and other Homeland Security grants, emphasized the importance of this funding. "These funds will help the state, local and tribal governments across the country provide emergency preparedness training for citizens and coordinate volunteer service opportunities for citizens to support our emergency responders," said Mencer.

To find out more about Citizen Corps and to find the Council nearest you, visit www.citizencorps.gov. For more information on the Ready campaign, visit www.ready.gov.

ORC Macro conducted the surveys by telephone in June 2003 with a random sample of 2,002 adults. The survey included questions about personal and household preparedness, neighborhood preparedness, and training and volunteering around emergency preparedness issues. Figures for age, gender, and race were weighted to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population (2000 U.S. Census). The margin of error is +/- 2% with a 95% certainty. The full survey results are available at:

http://www.citizencorps.gov/citizen_corps_2003_survey_results.ppt.

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